

Act 3.

ARTAXERXES.

Scene 2.



Stothard ad vivum del.

Heath sculp.

M^{rs} BILLINGTON in the Character of **MANDANE**.

*Let not rage, thy Bosom firing,
Pity's softer claim remove*

Publish'd by W. Lowndes, Sep^r 16th 1788.

K Metastasio

ARTAXERXES.

AN
ENGLISH OPERA.

As it is Performed at the
THEATRES ROYAL
IN

DRURY-LANE,

AND

COVENT-GARDEN.

The Musick Compos'd by

THO. AUG. ARNE, Mus. Doc.

A NEW EDITION.

L O N D O N:

Printed for W. LOWNDE S. N.º 77 Fleet Street,

1787

Price one Shilling

708
17

☞ The Reader is requested to observe, that
the Passages omitted in the Representation at
the Theatres, are here preserved and distin-
guished by inverted Commas, as from line 8
to line 12 in page 9.



P R E F A C E.

THE Reputation of METASTASIO, is too well established in the World, to need any Apology for giving this Public a Translation of *Artaxerxes*, an Opera performed and admired all over *Europe*. But as the narrative Part of the Drama may seem too barren of forcible Epithets, which, in reading or speaking, dignify the Stile, it may be necessary to give Mr. *Dryden's* and Lord *Lansdown's* Sentiments on the Occasion, which exactly correspond with those of our Author. Mr. *Dryden* says, — “ that no Critic can justly determine the Merit or Difficulty of writing a Poem for Music, till he has been frequently conversant with some skilful Musician, and acquired, by Experience, a Knowledge of what is most proper for Musical Expression :” And Lord *Lansdown*, in his Preface to the *British Enchanters*, exclaims against that Species of Dramatic Dialogue, which, instead of being free, natural, and easy, as Conversation should be, is precise or formal, argumenting *pro and con*, like Disputants in a School. He further asks the Question, “ Whether in Writing as in Dress, it is not possible to be too exact, too starcht, and too formal ?” And concludes thus — “ Pleasing Negligence many have seen ; who ever saw pleasing Formality ?”

Metastasio, in his Dialect, seems to affect Simplicity, and from his great Experience in writing for Music, has given the following Plan for the Poetry of an Opera, *viz.*

That the Fable, or Recitative, to which fixed Musical Sounds are adapted, should be simple Dialect; hard and dissonant Epithets (though ever so forcible in other respects) being destructive to Music, and when sung, for the chief Part, unintelligible.--- That the Similies be confined to the Songs; and that the Words, which are to express them, be as smooth and sonorous as possible, lest the Composer be cramped in his Fancy, and the Singers rendered incapable of shewing their Skill, which chiefly consists in openly displaying the Tones of their Voices, or running executive Passages.

The Translator of this Opera has no Merit, but from his Endeavour to follow the Author in all these Particulars. He, therefore, submits this first Attempt of the Kind to the Favour and Indulgence of the Public, not doubting that (if they consider the Difficulty of writing under such Restrictions; the Necessity of sometimes departing from the Author, on account of the different Idioms of our Language; and of leaving out many Beauties in the Narrative Part of the Drama, for the Sake of Brevity) they will rather peruse it with an Eye of Favour than Severity.

The

The A R G U M E N T.

XERXES, King of *Persia*, having been often discomfited by the *Greeks*, his Power began greatly to decline ; which *Artabanes*, Commander of the Royal Guards perceiving, entertained Hopes of sacrificing all the Royal Family to his Ambition, and by that Method to ascend the Throne of *Persia* ; for which Purpose, availing himself of the Advantage which Familiarity and Friendship with the King gave him, he entered, at the dead of Night, the Apartment of *Xerxes*, and slew him.

He afterwards so irritated the young Princes against one another, that *Artaxerxes*, one of them, caused his Brother *Darius* to be slain, believing him the Parricide, owing to the artful Insinuation of *Artabanes*.

Nothing was then wanting to complete his Designs, but the Death of *Artaxerxes* ; which *Artabanes* having prepared, though by various Accidents delayed, (which furnish the episodial Ornaments of this Drama, could not accomplish, the Treason being discovered, and *Artaxerxes* preserved ; which Discovery and Preservation form the principal Action of the ensuing Drama.

Justin, lib. 3, cap. 1.

The Action is represented in or near the Palace of the Kings of *Persia*, in the City of *Susa*.

Dramatis

Dramatis Personæ.

	Drury-Lane.	Covent-Garden.	Hay-Market.
Artaxerxes, <i>Prince and afterwards King of Persia, Friend to Arbaces, and in love with Semira</i>	Mrs. BADDELEY.	Mrs. KENNEDY.	Mr. BRETT.
Artabanes, <i>Generalissimo, and Favourite of the Royal Family; Follower to Arbaces and Semira</i>	Mr. VERNON.	Mr. DARLEY.	Mr. BANNISTER.
Arbaces, <i>Friend of Artaxerxes, in love with Mandane</i>	Mrs. FORBES.	Mr. LEONI.	Signora SESTINI.
Rimenes, <i>a General of the Army, and Confident of Artabanes</i>	Mr. FAWCETT.	Mr. KING.	Mr. WOOD.
Mandane, <i>Sister to Artaxerxes, in love with Arbaces</i>	Mrs. ARNE.	Mrs. BILLINGTON.	Miss GEORGE.
Semira, <i>Sister to Arbaces, in love with Artaxerxes</i>	Mrs. SCOTT.	Mrs. MORTON.	Miss MORRIS.

Nobles, Guards, and Attendants.



Jean-Baptiste de la Tour del. et sculp.

ACT I. SCENE, *An Inner Garden belonging to the Palace of the King of PERSIA. Moon-light.*

MANDANE and ARBACES.

Man. **S**TILL silence reigns around, suspicion sleeps,
And unperceived you may escape these walls.

Arab. Adieu, my love; O think on thy *Arbaces*.

Man. Yet stay, sweet youth; a few short minutes stay.

Arb. Adored *Mandane*! see the dawn appears.

DUETTINI. *Fair Aurora, pr'ythee stay ;
O retard unwelcome day ;
Think what anguish rends my breast ;
Thus caressing, thus carest ;
From the idol of my heart,
Forced at thy approach to part.*

Arab. Alas, thou know'st that, for my love to thee,
The king, great *Xerxes*, thy too rigid father,
Has banisht me the palace, should he know,
That, in defiance of his stern command,
I have presumed to scale this garden-wall ;
How little would a lover's plea avail,
When thou, his daughter, couldst not move his pity.
Man.

Man. Thy noble father, mighty *Artabanes*,
 Disposes at his will the heart of *Xerxes*;
 And the young prince my brother, *Artaxerxes*,
 Brought up with thee in virtuous emulation,
 Honours thy worth and boasts thy valued friendship;
 Their interest may soften his resentment.

Arb. Weak are their efforts, while his kingly pride
 Disdains to rank a princess with a subject.

Man. My spirits sink, my heart forgets to beat,
 I have not fortitude to bear thy loss—
 And must we part?---Then all good angels guard thee!

*Adieu, thou lovely youth;
 Let hope thy fears remove;
 Preserve thy faith and truth,
 But never doubt my love.*

[Exit.

Arb. O cruel parting! How can I survive?
 Divided thus from all that's sweet and fair,
 From her, for whom alone I live!

Enter ARTABANES.

Art. Son, *Arbaces*.

Arb. My father!

Art. Give me thy sword.

Arb. Sir, I obey.

Art. Here, take thou mine.

Arb. 'Tis drencht in blood!

Art. Fly, hide it from all eyes;
Xerxes, the king, this daring arm hath slain.

Arb. Forbid it heaven!

Art. O much-loved son!

Thy treatment was the spur to my revenge—
 For thee I'm guilty.

Arb. Would I had ne'er been born.

Art. Let not weak scruples thwart my great design;
 Perhaps *Arbaces* shall be king of *Persia*.

Arb.

Arb. I'm all confusion—

Art. No more—begone.

Arb. O fatal day!—Unhappy, lost *Arbaces*.

*Amid a thousand racking woes,
I pant, I tremble, and I feel
Cold blood from every vein distil,
And clog my lab'ring heart.*

" I see my fair one's lost repose,

" And, O! lament the fatal curse

" That he who gave me life could thus

" From virtue's laws depart."

[Exit.

Art. Be firm my heart.—In the pursuit of guilt,
The first advance admits not a retreat :
The royal blood, to the last hateful drop,
Must then be shed. Conscience, thy checks are vain—
The prince appears,—now art's my only refuge.

Enter ARTAXERXES, RIMENES, and Guards.

Artax. Dear *Artabanes*, glad I meet thee here ;
Thy prince demands thy counsel,
Thy royalty—Revenge—

Art. I tremble, fir—
This dire injunction wants an explanation.

Artax. Disastrous fate—Yonder my father lies
Savagely murder'd !

Art. Ah! my ill-boding fears !
Unsat'd thirst of empire !
Alas!—Will nothing but a father's blood
Allay thy heat, and quench thy raging fever ?

Artax. Well I conceive—my faithless cruel brother
Darius—

Artab. Who but he at dead of night could penetrate
The palace ? Who approach the royal bed ?
Nay more, his known ambition—

Artax. O, if here lives a heart that calls me friend,
Or feels compassion for his slaughter'd king,
Quick let him bring the traitor to our presence.

B

Art.

Art. That welcome task be mine—
Guards follow me.

[*Going.*

Artax. Yet stay---

Darius is the son of *Xerxes*.

Art. Who kills the father, is no more a son.

*Behold! on Lethe's dismal strand
Thy father's troubled spirit stand!
In his face what grief profound!
See he rolls his haggard eyes;
Hark! Revenge! Revenge! he cries;
And points to his still bleeding wound:
Obey the call, revenge his death,
And calm his soul that gave thee breath.* [Exit.

ARTAXERXES *going.* Enter *Semira*.

Sem. Stay, *Artaxerxes*, stay.

Artax. Adieu, *Semira*.

Sem. And dost thou fly me? Go then, cruel prince,
No more shall ill-timed fondness importune thee.

Artax. Beauteous *Semira*, should I longer stay,
There's such a fyren sweetness in thy voice,
'Twould lull me to forget my filial duty,

Sem. Away, ungrateful.

Artax. Fair *Semira*, lovely maid,
Cease in pity to upbraid

My oppress'd but constant heart:

Full sufficient are the woes,

Which my cruel stars impose;

Heaven, alas! has done its part. [Exit.

Sem. I fear some dread disaster--- Say, *Rimenes*,
What means this strange confusion in the prince?

Rim. *Xerxes* is slain---

Suspicion points the finger at *Darius*:

And *Artaxerxes* bears a dreadful conflict,

'Twixt filial duty to revenge his father,

And brotherly compassion for *Darius*.

Sem. O fatal deed! th' effect of wild ambition;
Heaven knows if *Artaxerxes'* life be safe.

Rim.

Rim. Let fate be busy in destructive slaughter;
We, blest with love, and seated on the shore,
Will view the destin'd shipwreck.

Sem. Think not that love can find a place to enter,
When the sad heart's surrounded with misfortunes;
Leave me, *Rimenes*, to my troubled thoughts.

Rim. Your web of scorn is not so closely woven,
But I can see between each subtle thread;
Yet, born to love, undaunted I'll pursue thee;
Since hope inspires my breast, what you deny,
Ungrateful maid! kind fancy shall supply.

*When real joy we miss,
'Tis some degree of bliss,
T' enjoy ideal pleasure,
And dream of hidden treasure.
The soldier dreams of wars,
And conquers without scars;
The sailor in his sleep,
With safety ploughs the deep:
So I, thro' fancy's aid,
Enjoy my heavenly maid,
And blest with thee and love,
Am greater far than Jove.*

[Exit.

Sem. Ye Gods, protectors of the *Persian* empire,
Preserve my *Artaxerxes*---Yet if he be blest---
Semira's state is wretched: *Xerxes* dead,
This prince will mount the throne:
Beloved by me, and raised above my hopes,
The hand which he intreated when a subject,
When sovereign of *Persia* he'll disdain.

*How hard is my fate,
How desperate my state,
When virtue and honour excite,
To suffer distress,
Contented to bless,
The object in whom I delight.*

*Yet, midst all the woes
My soul undergoes,
Thro' Virtue's too rigid decree;
I'll scorn to complain,
If the force of my pain
Awaken his pity for me.*

[Exit.

SCENE, *The Palace.**Enter MANDANE.*

Where do I fly?—Ah, hapless maid!
Thus, in one fatal instant,
To lose a brother, father, and a lover!

*Enter ARTAXERXES.**Artax.* Alas, *Mandane*!*Man.* Does *Darius* live?

Or are thy guilty hands
Imbrued in thy brother's blood?

Artax. Fain would I shun that deed,
Which to prevent, I've searcht throughout the palace
For *Artabanes* and *Darius*——
But all in vain——

Man. See, *Artabanes* comes.*Enter ARTABANES.**Artax.* My friend!*Art.* I sought you, sir—All is accomplit.*Artax.* Ha! speak, explain.

Art. Your father's death's revenged,
Darius slain, and *Artaxerxes* now
Is *Persia's* king.

Artax. Oh, Gods!*Man.* Oh, dire misfortune!*Art.* Why that deep sigh, my liege? 'Twas your command.*Artax.* Alas! 'tis true, the guilt is only mine.*Art.* What guilt, my sovereign?

'Twas merely justice to your murder'd father.
Take comfort, sir;

And

And think, that in *Darius'* death,
A wicked, bloody parricide is punisht.

Enter SEMIRA.

Sem. Oh, *Artaxerxes* !

Artax. Say, fair *Semira*, why this seeming joy ?

Sem. *Darius* is not guilty of the murder.

Man. What do I hear ?

Artax. I'm struck with double horror.

Sem. Th' assaffin is secured.

Artax. O quick, proceed.

Sem. Your watchful centinels, when he had leapt
The garden-wall, o'ertook him as he fled,
His deep confusion, palid countenance,
And sword yet reeking with the crimson blood,
Strongly proclaim him guilty.

Artax. But the name.

Sem. At my request to know it
All hung their heads in silence.

Art. Alas, it is my son !

[*Aside.*

Artax. Must *Artaxerxes* then ascend the throne,
Distain'd with brother's blood ?

Oh, I shall never taste of peace again.——

Quick, bring this traitor ; that unbounded rage

May execute the vengeance he deserves.——

Hold, *Artabenes*, dear *Mandane*, stay.

Semira, leave me not in this distress.——

Where is my friend, *Arbaces* ?

Artab. He was forbid the court by royal *Xerxes*
For his presumptuous love to fair *Mandane*.

Artax. Fly, bring him to my arms —— I here ab-
solve him.

Enter RIMENES with ARBACES Prisoner.

Rim. Who in this royal presence would believe
Arbaces to be guilty ?

Artab. How !

Artax. My friend !

Artab. My son !

Sem. My brother !

Man.

Man. Oh, ye Gods! my lover!

Artax. Would in the pangs of death I'd met my friend,

Rather than thus in fetters like a traitor.

Arb. I'm innocent.

Artax. O make but that appear,
And doubly 'twill endear thee to my love.

Arb. I am not guilty, that's my only plea.

Artab. This prudent caution answers to my wish.
[*Aside.*

Man. But your resentment 'gainst the king—

Arb. Was just.

Artax. Didst thou not fly?

Arb. I did.

Man. This thy reserve—

Arb. Is requisite.

Artax. And thy down-cast confusion —

Arb. Is suited to th' occasion.

Rim. This bloody sword— [Shewing it.

Arb. Was in the scabbard, when you took me prisoner.

Art. And canst thou yet deny the cruel deed?

Arb. Great sir, I still assert my innocence.

Artab. Audacious boy! thus obstinate in ill,
Thy fight's my torment, and this deed my shame.

Arb. And does my father join in my destruction!

Artab. Thy father! away, I renounce the soft claim!

Thou spot on my honour, thou blast to my fame.

Let justice the traitor to punishment bring;

His father he lost, when he murder'd his king. [Ex.

Arb. Ye cruel Gods, what crime have I committed
To draw relentless vengeance on my head?

Semira! sister! hear me with compassion. [Exit Sem.

“ *Sem.* Acquit thee of this foul offence,

“ Return with spotless innocence;

“ Then shall my hapless brother see,

“ That never sister lov'd like me.”

Arb.

Arb. Appearance, I must own, is strong against me,
But truth is on my side—I'm innocent.

Artax. Pray heaven thou may'st; but till the law
decide

You must remain a prisoner.

[*Exit.*

Arab. Ah, dear *Rimenes*, pity my hard fate—
My friend!

Rim. I am no traitor's friend—Adieu.

[*Exit.*

Arb. Beauteous *Mandane*, turn at least and hear me.

Man. Away! you sue in vain.

[*Going.*

Arb. O stay, I charge thee—
Think on thy former love.

Man. 'Tis turn'd to hate.

Arb. And you believe me guilty?

Man. I am convinced.

Arb. O too lovely, too unkind,

If my lips no credit find,

Pierce my breast; my heart shall prove

Strong in virtue, firm in love.

Guiltless, wretched, left forlorn,

And worse than murder'd by thy scorn.

[*Exit guarded.*

Recitative accompanied.

Man. Dear and beloved shade of my dead father,
Thee I invoke to spirit up my rage,
Lest fond credulity too strongly plead,
And turn my purpose from a just revenge;
For, Oh! I feel the tyrant love within,
He rends my breast, he struggles for *Arbaces*;
Help me, kind Gods, to tear away his image.

Fly, soft ideas, fly;

That neither tear nor sigh

My virtue may betray.

Nature's great call,

That governs all,

A daughter must obey.

Alas,

*Alas, my soul denies
To hear revenge's cries!
Dare not, fond heart,
To take his part,
But drive his form away.*

[Exit.]

ACT II. SCENE, *The Royal Apartments.*

Artax. GUARDS, speed ye to the tower,
And instantly conduct *Arbaces* to me.

Artab. Good my lord,
Think not the partial fondness of a father
Has urged this counsel.

Artax. No; 'tis justice dictates;
He still persists that he is innocent,
And his fair truth was ne'er till now suspected;
I will withdraw— [Going.
O, reconcile the safety of your son
With your king's peace, and the honour of his throne.

*In infancy, our hopes and fears
Were to each other known;
And friendship, in our riper years,
Has twined our hearts in one.
O clear him then from this offence;
Thy love, thy duty prove;
Restore him with that innocence,
Which first inspired my love.*

Artab. So far my great resolve succeeds. [Aside.
Approach, *Arbaces*.

Enter ARBACES and Guards.

And you, his guards, in the next chamber wait.

[Exeunt Guards.]

Arb. My father!

Artab. Ever watchful to preserve thee,
I artfully have gain'd from *Artaxerxes*

The

The liberty to question thee :
 Take thee this fortunate occasion,
 And, by a secret way, which I will shew thee,
 Delude the guards, and fly.

Arb. Sir, my escape
 Would rise in evidence to prove me guilty.

Artab. 'Tis folly all : I give thee liberty ;
 From the king's wrath I snatch thee ; and, perhaps,
 The public voice shall call thee to the throne.

Arb. What said you, sir.

Artab. Long have you known
 The people's hatred to the royal blood :
 Away.

The fight of you will fire the mutinous troops,
 Whose leaders to your interest are sworn.

Arb. I turn a rebel ! Horror's in the thought—
 Your pardon, sir ;—Is this a father's counsel ?
 Guards, enter quick, bring me again my chains—
 Conduct me to my prison. [Enter Guards.]

Artab. I burn with rage.

Arb. Yet calm this transport—think on my affliction.
 Sir—father—turn—O grant one kind adieu.

Artab. Unworthy boy ! I'm deaf to thy request.

Arb. *Disdainful you fly me,
 In anger exclaim ;
 All comfort deny me,
 And murder my fame.*

*No grief can the heart
 To pity incline,
 That bears not a part
 In sorrow like mine.*

*Nature's tender plea is vain ;
 Welcome then my chains again.*

*O rigour unjust !
 O counsel accurst !*

*Ambition ill-placed,
My virtue disgraced;
The pains I endure,
Death only can cure.*

Disdainful you fly me, &c.

[Exit, with the guards.

Enter RIMENES.

Rim. Why, my dear friend, so pensive, so inactive?

Artab. My wayward son, that bar to my ambition,
At once rejects both liberty and crowns.

Rim. Let us away, and force him from the tower.

Artab. The present time may better be employ'd,
If *Artaxerxes* perish by our hands.---
Let not my friend betray me.

Rim. I, my lord!
Forbid it gratitude! My abject state
Cast me below the notice of mankind,
Till your great power exalted me to honour.

Artab. Small recompence for thy good services:
But should kind fortune smile on this attempt,
Then judge if *Artabanes* loves his friend.

Rim. My hand, my heart, are guided by your will.

Artab. I have observed thy passion for *Semira*—
Spare thy confusion; and let this convince
Thee of my love—*Semira* shall be thine.

Rim. Thanks, gracious sir; my joy is past expres-
sion.

Artab. Come hither, daughter. - [Seeing *Semira*.

Enter SEMIRA.

In this valiant chief
Behold thy lord and husband.

Sem. Cruel sound!

O sir, reflect---Is this a time for nuptials,
When my unhappy brother---

Artab.

Artab. Peace, no more.

'Tis my command---reply not, but obey. [Exit.

Sem. I tremble---hear me, fir,---O, if you love me,
Prevent this marriage.

Rim. Sure *Semira* mocks me.

Sem. Though, by constraint, you seize my helpless
hand,

My heart disdains the brutal violence.

Rim. Give me thy beauty, and reserve thy heart;
Thou keep'st the worst, I gain the better part.

*To sigh and complain,
Alike I disdain,
Contented my wish to enjoy;
I scorn to reflect
On a lady's neglect,
Or barter my peace for a toy.*

*In love, as in war,
I laugh at a scar,
And, if my proud enemy yield,
The joy that remains
Is to lead her in chains,
And glean the rich spoils of the field.* [Exit.

Sem. How many links to dire misfortune's chain
Are woven in one day!

Enter MANDANE.

Stay, dear *Mandane*---

Why this haste?

Man. I attend the council.

Sem. I'll too attend, if ought within my power
May help my brother.

Man. Our views are different; thou desir'st to save
him;
I seek his death.

Sem. Is this a language for *Arbaces'* lover?

Man. It well becomes the daughter of dead *Xerxes*.

Sem. Away, thou cruel maid!
Enforce his crime, and urge his speedy death.

But first prepare your heart, and quite erase
 The soft remembrance of your former passion,
 The tender hopes and fears, warm vows of truth,
 Fond sighs exchanged, and, last, the sweet idea
 Of that dear form, which first inspired your love.

Man. Ah, barbarous *Semira*! thus to wake
 My guilty pity; rebel to my duty.

*If o'er the cruel tyrant love,
 A conquest I believed;
 The flattering error cease to prove;
 O let me be deceived.*

*Forbear to fan the gentle flame;
 Which love did first create;
 What was my pride is now my shame,
 And must be turn'd to hate.*

*Then call not to my wavering mind,
 The weakness of my heart:
 Which, ah! I feel too much inclined
 To take the traitor's part.*

[Exit.

Sem. Which fatal evil shall I first oppose?
 My princess, brother, this detested lover,
 The king, my father, all are enemies;
 And each attacks me in some tender part;
 While I exert my power against the one,
 The others rush on my defenceless breast.

*If the river's swelling waves
 Overflow their usual bed;
 Scarce th' affrighted peasant saves
 From the flood his homely shed.*

*Tho' he stop one open shore,
 Where the waters swiftly glide,
 At an hundred places more,
 Rushes in th' impetuous tide.*

[Exit.

SCENE,

SCENE, *The Council Chamber, with a throne, seats on the sides for the grandees of the kingdom, &c.* Artaxerxes, preceded by guards, afterwards by the nobles, followed by Mandane, Semira, Artabanes and Rimenes.

Artax. Ye solid pillars of the *Persian* empire,
Behold me fated to sustain the cares
Of my paternal throne, and much I'm grieved
That my loved father's death so heavy lies
Upon my absent friend; but since *Arbaces*
Denies this accusation, let the father,
Whose virtues have endear'd him to our favour,
Be the son's judge, to cast him or acquit him:
In him is vested all our regal power.

Man. In him! does friendship so prevail o'er duty?

Artax. Not so, *Mandane*, for his loyal father
Has double reason for severity.
I ought to vindicate the death of *Xerxes*;
But if *Arbaces* be the criminal,
His father, with more rigour, will revenge
His monarch's death, and his own public shame.

Artab. Ah, sir, what trial!--

Artax. Worthy of thy virtue---
If any think me partial, let him speak.

Rim. This silence is a general approbation.

Sem. My brother comes.

Man. Ah me!

Artax. Give your attention.

[*Ascends the throne, the grandees sit.*]

Man. (*aside.*) Now prudence guide the reins of my affection.

Cease, my busy heart, to flutter in my breast.

Enter ARBACES in Chains, guarded.

Arb. Am I so much the hatred of all *Persia*,
That it unites to witness my misfortune?
My sovereign!

Artax.

Artax. O *Arbaces*, call me friend;
 For till thy crime is proved, that title's mine;
 But, as a name so tender ill becomes
 Th' impartial judge, thy most unhappy cause
 I have assign'd to worthy *Artabanes*.

Arb. My father judge!

Artax. Yes, he.

Arb. I'm chill'd with horror.

Artax. *Arbaces*, in this presence thou appear'st
 To be the murderer of royal *Xerxes*.
 The circumstances urged are these---
 That thou hadst entertained presumptuous love
 Of this most honour'd princess;
 For which, by *Xerxes* banisht from the court,
 You sought revenge, and found it in his death.

Arb. Nay more, the bloody sword, the time, the
 place,

And flight, conspire to fix the guilt on me;
 And yet my heart is free;—I'm innocent.

Artab. Demonstrate that, and so appease the wrath
 Of this offended princess.

“ *Arb.* Ah! forbear;

“ If you would have me with a steady mind,

“ Support my sufferings, make not the assault

“ In such a tender part.—Barbarous father!

“ *Artab.* Rash young man, be silent.

“ Consider where thou art, and who attends thee.

“ *Man.* Be still, my beating heart.— [Aside.

“ *Artax.* But this thy crime,

“ Requires defence, or a sincere repentance.

“ *Arb.* My king, I find no crime to be defended,

“ Nor motive for repentance: That's my answer.

“ *Artab.* O filial love! [Aside.”

Man. Whether he plead or not,

He equally is guilty.—Where is justice?

Is this the father that should vindicate

His murder'd king, and his own public shame?

Arb. Cruel *Mandane*! does thy voice condemn me?

Man. Bear up, my heart, [Aside.

Artab.

Artab. Your just resentment, princess,
Spurs on my lazy virtue.---

Let *Persia* then, in *Artabanes'* rigour,
Record his justice and his loyalty.--- [*Takes the pen.*
My son I here condemn---[*Signs*] *Arbaces* dies.

Man. Oh, Gods!

Artax. Suspend a while, the rash decree.

[*Artabanes gives the paper to Artaxerxes.*

Artab. 'Tis sign'd, my liege---I have fulfil'd my duty.

Artax. Unnatural sentence!

Sem. O inhuman father.

Man. Alas, my tears betray me.

Arb. Weeps *Mandane*,

In pity of my cruel destiny?

Man. Pleasure may start a tear, as well as grief.

Artab. Now I have finish'd the stern judge's part,
Permit, O king, the feelings of a father.

Pardon, my son, the effect of tyrant duty:

Suffer with patience, and remember this,

The worst of every evil is the fear.

Arb. My patience, sir, begins at last to leave me:

"In view o' th' world, to find myself expos'd

"A seeming guilty object; all my hopes

"Cut off i' th' bloom, the morn of life my end;

"Hated by *Persia*, by my king,

"And her whom I adore: to know that you,"

Barbarous father,---(Ah, I lose my life!)

Adieu.---

[*Going.*

Artab. I freeze.

[*Aside.*

Man. I die.

Arb. Stay rash *Arbaces*!

[*Returning.*

Where world'st thou go? Ah, sir, forgive your son;

Behold him at your feet---

Excuse the transports of my frantic grief;

Shed all my blood, 'tis yours,---I'll not complain;

But kiss the honour'd hand that sign'd my death.

Artab. Enough, O rise.

Thou hast but too much reason to lament:

But know---(O Gods!)---Take one embrace and part.

Arb.

Arb. *By that beloved embrace,
 By this my fond adieu,
 Deplore my hapless case,
 Condemn'd, alas ! for you.
 Appease my love, my truth commend.
 Yourself preserve, my king defend.
 My sentence I obey,
 To filial duty true ;
 And scarce have power to say
 A long and last adieu !* [Exit, guarded.

Man. Ah me ! at poor *Arbaces'* parting
 I feel the stroke of death.

Artab. *Mandane*, now I hope you're satisfy'd ;
 For, at the price of my paternal love, I have
 To fate your vengeance, sacrificed my son.

Man. Savage, no more---
 Avoid my presence : dare not to view the light
 Of sun or stars ; but hide thy cruel head
 Within the deepest bowels of the earth,

Artab. Is then my virtue---

Man. Silence, inhuman !

Artab. Did not *Mandane's* rage excite my justice ?

Man. The daughter ought to vindicate the father ;
 But thou, a father, shouldst have saved thy son.

*Monster, away !
 From chearful day,
 To the gloomy desert fly :
 Paths explore,
 Where lions roar,
 And devouring tigers lie.
 Tho' for food
 They wade in blood,
 All to save their young agree ;
 Every creature,
 Fierce by nature,
 Harmless is compar'd to thee.*

[Exit.

" *Artax.*

- " *Artax.* See, loved *Semira*,
 " How heaven conspires the ruin of *Arbaces*.
 " *Sem.* Inhuman tyrant!
 " You first destroy your friend,
 " And then bewail him.
 " *Artax.* I, to thy father's will, his life committed;
 " How was I then a tyrant?
 " All *Persia* knows my friendship for *Arbaces*,
 " And faithful love to thee.
 " *Sem.* I thought you once
 " A tender lover, and a generous friend;
 " But in one instant you have proved yourself
 " In friendship false, and treacherous in love.

- " *This bosom, a stranger to rest,*
 " *Resentment and pity assail;*
 " *As both for dominion contest,*
 " *So both, to my sorrow, prevail:*
 " *My heart, in this desperate state,*
 " *To give each assailant its due,*
 " *Now bleeds for my brother's hard fate,*
 " *And burns with resentment to you.* [Exit."

Artax. O, *Artabanes*!

Artab. Lament not, sir, but leave complaints to me;
 I am the most unhappy of mankind.

Artax. " Thy woe must needs be great,
 " When mine is insupportable."

My pity meant, assigning him to thee,
 That thy paternal love should set him free;
 But thou a father of affection void,
 By doom of death thy offspring hast destroy'd.

Can salt tears or loud lamenting,
Now thy sentence past prevent,
Ah, too late is all repenting,
Tho' with grief thy heart is rent;

D

But

*But since guiltless I believe him,
 I'll his desperate state attend,
 From disgraceful chains relieve him,
 Aid his flight and save my friend.*

[Exit Artaxerxes.]

Recitative accompanied.

Artab. At length my soul has room t' indulge its
 grief—

What racking thoughts surround the guilty breast—
 O, my dear son, forgive the piercing woes,
 Which my foul deeds inflict upon thy youth ;
 I come to save thee from the jaws of death,
 And pay thy virtues with a kingly throne.

*Thou, like the glorious sun,
 Thy splendid course shalt run :
 What tho' the night,
 Obscure his light,
 When prison'd in the west ;
 The day returns,
 Again he burns,
 The god of day confest.*

[Exit.]

ACT

ACT III. SCENE, *A prison.*

ARBACES, *in a melancholy Posture.*

A R I E T T A.

WHY is death for ever late
To conclude a wretch's woe;
Those who live in happy state,
Feel too soon th' untimely blow:

Enter ARTAXERXES.

Artax. *Arbaces!*

Arb. Gracious heaven, what's this I see!
Does royal *Artaxerxes* deign to visit
The wretch *Arbaces*, in this horrid gloom!

Artax. Pity and friendship brought me here to save
thee.

Arb. To save me!

Artax. Yes. That secret passage leads
To life and liberty; then quickly fly—
Remember *Artaxerxes*, and be happy.

Arb. Your pardon, sir, the world esteems me guilty;
Then let me die; your honour, sir, requires it.
Happy my exit, having once preserved
My sovereign's life, and now his spotless honour.

Artax. Such noble sentiments can ne'er proceed
From guilty minds—Beloved *Arbaces*, fly—
As friend, I beg thee to preserve thyself;
But if that fails—as sovereign, I command thee.

Arb. In gratitude to thy exalted friendship,
I'll quit this scene of horror and despair.
But Oh! Thus exiled, I shall only fly,
Restless to tread the paths of misery.

*Water parted from the sea,
May increase the river's tide;
To the bubbling fount may flee,
Or thro' fertile vallies glide:*

*Yet in search of lost repose,
Doom'd like me, forlorn to roam,
Still it murmurs as it flows,
Till it reach its native home.*

[Exit.]

Artax. That front, secure in conscious innocence,
Defies the charge of guilt: Affliction's veil
Can never quite eclipse the inward light,
That from a noble soul darts forth its rays,
When in the countenance the heart is seen.

*Tho' oft a cloud, with envious shade,
Conceals the face of day;
The sun is still in flames array'd,
His beams immortal, not decay'd:
Soon the gloomy veil retires;
He darts each powerful ray,
And light and heat expires.*

[Exit.]

Enter ARTABANES, with a train of conspirators.

My son, *Arbaces*---Where art thou retired?
Sure he should hear my voice---what ho---*Arbaces!*
O heaven---guards, watch the entrance of the prison,
Till I can find my son.

[Exit.]

Enter

Enter RIMENES.

Rim. Not yet arrived!
Sir, Artabanes!

[*Exit.*

Re-enter ARTABANES.

Artab. O unhappy father!
My son I seek in vain---my blood grows chill;
I fear---I doubt---perhaps in---

Re-enter RIMENES.

Rim. Artabanes!

Artab. Where is *Arbaces*?

Rim. Is he not with you?

Artab. O cruel Gods? th' unfortunate has perisht;

Rim. Suspicion always borders on extremes;
And might not *Artaxerxes* or *Mandane*,
The friend or lover, have procured his flight?
What strange delay is this!—Let's to our task;
Behold the way that leads us to the palace.

Artab. And what great enterprize shall I accomplish,
My son being lost?

Rim. What, have you then, for nought,
Secured the royal guards; and I, the troops?
Determine, sir; this instant *Artaxerxes*
Prepares to take the coronation oath;
The sacred cup is by your order poison'd:
And shall we then so basely---

Artab. O my friend!

Arbaces lost, for whom should I engage?

Rim. Thy son *Arbaces* from thy hand expects
The throne, if living; and if dead, revenge.

Artab. That, that alone recalls my fleeting spirit;
Lead on, kind friend; my fate depends on thee.

Rim. I'll lead thee on to joyful victory.

O let

*O let the danger of a son
 Excite vindictive ire ;
 The prospect of a kingdom won
 Should light ambition's fire.
 To wounded minds, revenge is balm ;
 With vigour they engage,
 And sacrifice a pleasing calm,
 To a more pleasing rage. [Exit with consp.*

Recitative accompanied.

Artab. Ye adverse Gods ! y've found the only way
 To quell my vast ambition ; perplexing doubt,
 Whether my son yet lives, awakens fear ;
 And the dire image of despair starts up,
 Unnerves my arm, and checks my daring soul.

*O much loved son, if death
 Has stolen thy vital breath,
 I'll share thy hapless fate ;
 But ere the dagger drinks my blood,
 A murder'd king, at Lethe's flood,
 The tidings shall relate.*

*Bid Charon cease from toil,
 And rest upon his oar,
 Till I attain the happy soil,
 Where we shall part no more. [Exit.*

SCENE, MANDANE'S Apartment.

Enter MANDANE and SEMIRA.

Man. Perhaps the king released *Arbaces*.

Sem. No—rather destroyed him,

Man. How !

Sem.

Sem. 'Tis known to all ;
In secret he resigned his wretched life.

Man. O hapless youth ! O tidings worse than death !

Sem. I hope your vengeance now is satisfied —
Or would you other victims ? — Speak.

Man. I cannot ;
Light cares are ever soften'd by complaint :
But such as mine, arrest the power of speech.

Sem. Ne'er lived a heart more lost to sense of pity :
All eyes in *Persia* wail his hapless fate ;
But yours are dry.

Man. The deeper my affliction :
Small is the grief that vents itself in tears.

Sem. Go, if not satisfied, and feast your eyes
Upon the slaughter'd spoils of my dear brother ;
With secret joy, number his bloody wounds.

Man. Be silent---leave me.

Sem. Never ; while thou liv'st,
I'll haunt thee like a spirit, and my wrongs
Shall dash thy hopes with bitterness and woe.

Man. You think me cruel, and denounce revenge —
Ah ! how have I deserved thy enmity ?

*Let not rage, thy bosom firing,
Pity's softer claim remove ;
Spare a heart that's just expiring,
Forced by duty, rackt by love.*

*Each ungentle thought suspending,
Judge of mine, by thy soft breast ;
Nor with rancour, never ending,
Heap fresh sorrows on th' oppress'd.*

Let not rage, thy bosom firing, &c.

Heaven,

*Heaven, that every joy has crost,
 Ne'er my wretched state can mend ;
 I, alas ! at once have lost,
 Father, brother, lover, friend.*

Let not rage, &c.

[Exit.

Sem. What have I done ! Alas, I vainly thought,
 Dividing grief, to lessen my affliction ;
 These cruel insults, vented on *Mandane*,
 Have pierced her breast, and not relieved my own.

*" 'Tis not true, that in our grief,
 " Others weeping in distress,
 " To our troubles bring relief,
 " Making each misfortune less.*

*" No, when sore oppress'd by fate,
 " Better 'tis to sigh alone,
 " Than support a double weight,
 " Others sorrows, and our own."*

[Exit.

Enter ARBACES.

Arb. Nor here my searching eyes can find *Mandane*.
 Fain would my heart, before external exile,
 Indulge its fondness with a last adieu.
 Perhaps, this way---but whither do I wander ?
 Rash man---O heavenly pow'rs behold her there !
 My spirits fail me---yet I'll speak---*Mandane !*

Enter MANDANE.

Man. Ye powers ! *Arbaces !* and at liberty !

Arb. A friendly hand unlockt my cruel fetters.

Man. Ah ! fly, begone.

Arb.

Arb. How can I part, for ever, from such beauty?

Man. Perfidious traitor! what wouldst thou with me?

Arb. Am I no longer dear to my *Mandane*?

Man. Thou art become the object of my hate.

Arb. Barbarous maid! my death shall end thy scorn.

I fly to meet my fate---Adieu---for ever. [Going.

Man. Hear me, *Arbaces*.

Arb. Ha! what torture more?

Man. I cannot speak.

Arb. O heaven!

Man. Fly, save thyself.

Arb. What means my princess? ---this returning pity---

Man. Does not arise from love---but fly---and live.

DUETTO.

Arb. *For thee I live, my dearest;
But if I meet disdain,
For thee, my dear, I'll die.*

Man. *How lovely thou appearest,
My blushes will explain.
I can no more reply.*

Arb. *Then hear me.*

Man. *No.*

Arb. *Thou art—*

Man. *Divide not thus my heart:
Leave me—In pity go.*

Both. *Ye Gods that torture so,
Some timely respite send;
When will your torture end?*

[Exeunt, different ways.

E

SCENE,

SCENE, *A Temple, and Throne, with a Crown and Sceptre ; the Image of the Sun, with a lighted Altar.*

ARTAXERXES, ARTABANES, Nobles, &c.

Artax. To you, my people, much beloved, I offer
Myself, not less a father, than a king :
Your native rights, your customs, and your laws,
With jealous care I ever will maintain,
And raise up treasure in my people's hearts.

Artab. Here is the sacred cup---
Your solemn oath must bind the lasting tie :
Fulfil th' accustom'd rites---and drink thy death. [*Aside.*

Recitative accompanied.

Artax. Resplendent God, by whom sweet *April*
blooms,
Thou genial beam, that warms us and enlightens,
Look awful down ; and if my treacherous lips
Have utter'd falshood, may this wholesome draught
Change, as it passes, into deadly poison.

Enter SEMIRA hastily.

Sem. Fly quick, my liege ; thousands of rebel troops
Surround the palace, by *Rimenes* led ;
Your death is plotted, and your guards corrupted.

Artax. O Gods !

Artab. What fear you, sir ? My single presence
Shall quell this tumult, and protect my king. [*Exit.*

Artax. Away, my friend, to victory or death.

Enter MANDANE.

Man. Hold, brother, the rebellious crew are fled.

Artax. Say how, *Mandane* ?

Man.

Man. Led by false *Rimenes*,
 They forced the gates, and enter'd, when *Arbaces*,
 Departing to eternal banishment,
 His single breast opposed, and swore to die
 In his great master's cause: all dropt their arms,
 Except that daring rebel at their head;
 On him *Arbaces*, like a lion, flew,
 Clove thro' his helmet, flew him, and revenged thee.

Artax. Where's my preserver --- bring him to my
 arms. [*Exeunt Officers, with Guards.*]
 He murder *Xerxes*! Impious supposition!

Man. My heart respire!

Sem. O loyal brother!

Man. Valour suppress, now springs again to glory.

*The soldier, tired of war's alarms,
 Forswears the clang of hostile arms,
 And scorns the spear and shield:
 But if the brazen trumpet sound,
 He burns with conquest to be crown'd,
 And dares again the field.*

Enter ARTABANES and ARBACES.

Arb. Behold, my king, *Arbaces* at thy feet.

Artax. O still my friend! come to my grateful breast.

Man. Yet that my brother may with better grace
 Reward this deed, and satisfy the people,
 Some reason give us for the bloody sword,
 Thy timorous flight, and all that waked suspicion.

Arb. If deeds, not words, proclaim a loyal heart,
 Permit me to be silent --- I am innocent.

Artax. Confirm it with a solemn imprecation,
 And of a truth, as *Persia's* law prescribes,
 That vessel drain'd shall be the sacred pledge.

Arb. I am prepared.

Artab. O cruel Gods! If my son drinks he dies!

Recitative accompanied.

Arb. Resplendent God, by whom sweet *April* blooms,
Thou genial beam that warms us and enlightens!

Artab (*Aside*) O wretched father!

Arb. If my treacherous lips
Have utter'd falsehood, may this wholesome draught
Change, as it passes.

Artab. Hold, 'tis poison.

Artax. What fury urged thee to so vile a deed?

Artab. Away disguise, the draught was meant for
thee;

But my paternal fondness has betray'd me.

I murder'd *Xerxes*; and, to gain the throne,
Would have destroy'd thee too.

Artax. Wretch, thou shalt die.

Arb. Then I disdain to live.

Artax. *Mandane* shall reward thy spotless virtue;
And thy fair sister shall partake our throne:
But for that traitor---

Arb. I will die for him:

My blood is his, and shall atone his crimes.

Artax. Thy loyalty and virtue, injured youth,
Shall change his sentence into banishment:
Make no reply, his exile is for life.

Man. Sure heaven inspired the merciful decree:
Arbaces and *Semira* must approve it;
Tho' for his crimes the father justly suffers,
His life is spared, that you, his guiltless children,
May not be ever wretched in his death.

CHORUS.

CHORUS. *Live to us, to empire live!
Great Augustus, long may'st thou
From the subject world receive
Laurel wreaths t' adorn thy brow!*

DUETTO. *Of his country ever free,
There the royal father see!

To the patron of our laws,
Pierce the air with loud applause.*

DUETTO. *Virtue in his soul resides;
In his truth the world confides,*

CHORUS. *To the patron of our laws,
Pierce the air with loud applause.*

DUETTO. *Pity from the throne descending,
How the monarch it endears;
When with justice, mercy blending,
In the king a God appears!*

DUETTO. *Tyrants claim, with iron sceptre,
Duty which our fears impart;
But our gentle kind protector,
Monarch reigns o'er every heart.*

CHORUS.

CHORUS. *Live to us, to empire live !
Great Augustus, long may'st thou
From the subject world receive
Laurel wreaths & adorn thy brow !*
[Exeunt omnes.]

F I N I S.

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